

*Module 8, Lesson 2 Handout:*

## **Symptoms & Conditions with Amenorrhea**

Does any female really love getting a period? Probably not, but menstruation is essential for so many aspects of health. So, let's give it a little love. Lack of a period, a condition called amenorrhea, should be taken seriously, as this may point to another underlying condition. Not getting a period can also lead to several negative side effects.

### **What is Amenorrhea**

Amenorrhea is when a woman of childbearing age fails to menstruate. Primary amenorrhea is when a woman has not had her first period by age 15 or 16. Secondary amenorrhea is when a woman who has begun menstruation, stops menstruating for three or more months in a row.

### **Symptoms of Amenorrhea**

The side effects of not menstruating can range from simply physically uncomfortable to irreversible, and may include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Pelvic pain
- Acne
- Male patterned hair growth
- Lanugo, which is like peach fuzz all over the body
- Premature menopause
- Loss of libido
- Stunted growth in teens
- Dry skin
- Constipation
- Osteoporosis

### **Conditions with Amenorrhea**

Amenorrhea can occur for several different reasons. Some reasons aren't necessarily cause for concern, such as adjusting to a new birth control regimen or breastfeeding. Other times, amenorrhea

can indicate a serious issue in the body, often a hormonal imbalance brought on by changes in weight, stress, or other underlying factors.

## **The Following are Conditions that May Lead to Amenorrhea:**

- Weight gain and obesity
- Low body weight
- Nutrition deficiency
- Eating disorder
- Excessive exercise
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- Leptin deficiency
- Overactive thyroid gland
- Stress
- Other genetic disorders

Ask female clients about their menstruation during intake. Note that the client intake form you received in Level 1 includes this question. If amenorrhea is noted, work to identify the underlying cause, help the client find ways to manage symptoms, and/or refer that client to an MD or to discuss with her own doctor. Prolonged amenorrhea can result in serious health consequences, so it's important to help the client get to the bottom of its cause ASAP.